
POINT OF VIEW
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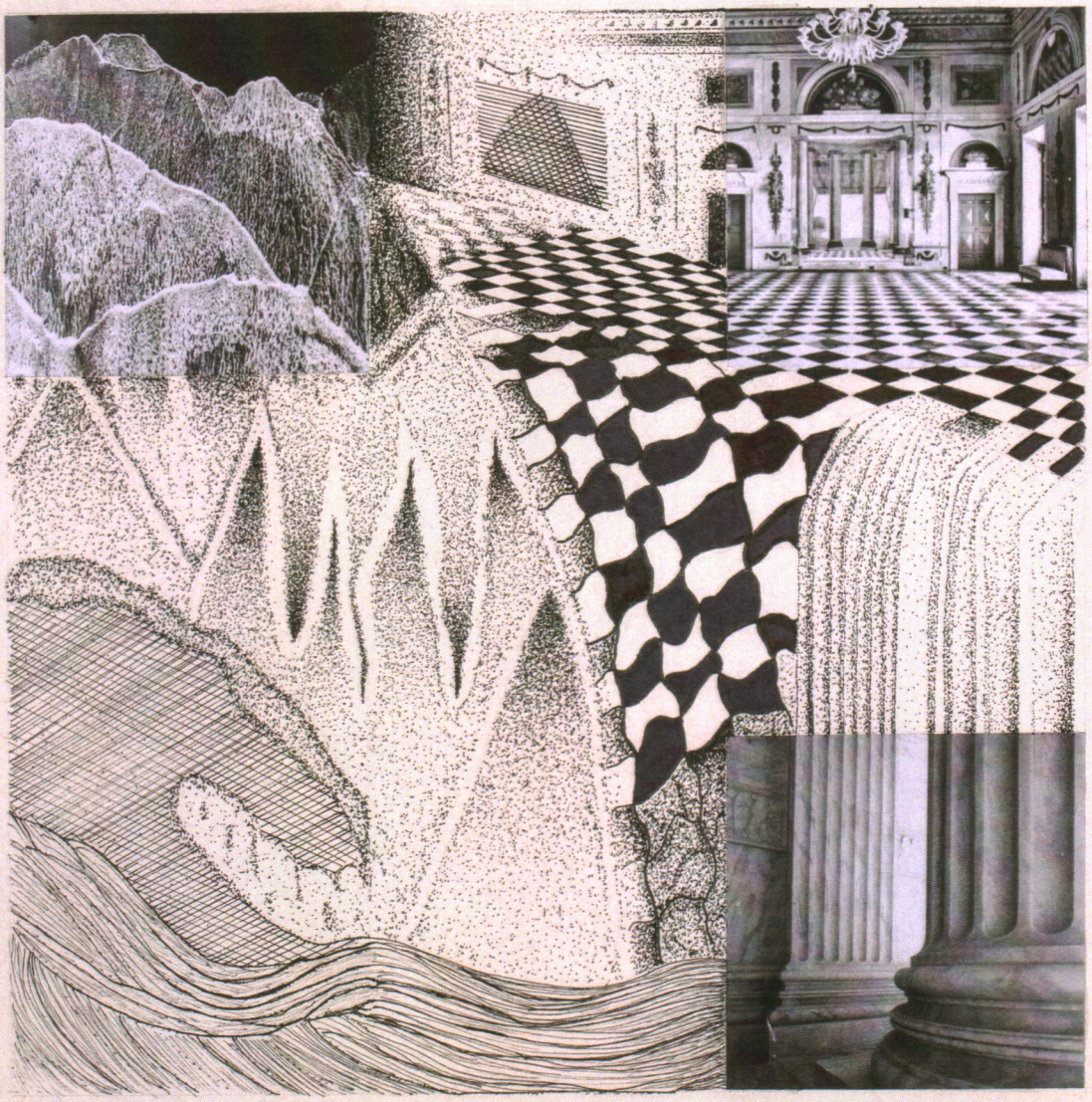
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MATRIX MOUNTAINS

BRIANNA JENNES

ink, collage on illustration board
15" x 15"



PROUD STRENGTH

FRANCISCO MUCI

stoneware thrown plate with cone 9 glazes
and oxide fired decal from drawing
9" diameter x .75"



ATHEISM

NATALIA MATLAG

I'll always be Catholic, I swear.
I tried my best to live my life purely
But God was never there.

On Sundays I'd dress up and do my hair,
Praise the Lord so ecstatically,
"I'll always be Catholic," I swear.

At a funeral we said a prayer
For the lady who lived her life so sinfully,
Why did she never let God in there?

Living with my father was a nightmare
His fists were always clenched tightly
"I'm still a Catholic," he'd swear.

Strangers on streets said we made a good pair
But do they know that he would rape me?
God never helped me then.

I'd spent almost every night in despair
Trying my best to worship blindly.
I'll always be Catholic, I swear
But God was never there.

POINT OF VIEW AWARD WINNER

CORAL

KATIE KUBICA

ceramic and glaze
10" x 8" x 6"



THE FARM

JAMES NAUGHTON

Pipe dreams
Shackled to the rusty iron arteries
Of rural America

Rows of corn standing erect like soldiers in their green uniforms
Cage you in on all sides
The asphalt roads take you nowhere

Piously kneel before the image of Jesus Crucified
Knees sink into the old timber like sand
Of the one dusty church in town

Sunlight vanishes beyond the endless fields
Your house with white paint flaking
Dropping tiny white stripes into your brown lawn

The air acidic with the smell of a burn pile
Tastes of burning plastic and paper stick to your tongue
Pipe dreams of escaping this

VIVIAN STEWART AWARD WINNER

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

CHARLES BUEHLER

digital photography
8.1" x 8"



LISTEN

ARI MCKELLIN

Why is my brain
Like earbuds tangled
Straight out of
A pocket unorganized?

My messy mind
Invites its mental issues
Into my days
In too many forms.

Distraction like a dog
Hunting down a squirrel
Darting up a tree--
Chaotic barking
All along the way.

Mood like the swings
When we were kids,
But dragging along
The wood chips
Beneath our toes
Instead of soaring above.

Repetition like a
Broken record,
Broken record,
Broken record,
No record of an end.

And anxiety.
I'm an artichoke,
Choking on what I
Need to say,
But can't.

If only they were to
Slow
Down,
Consider my
Different way of

Speaking,
And read
What I can't verbalize.

My voice is found
In the place it takes
Care to look
And consideration to hear.

FOUND SURFACE PAINTING

LILLIAN MULLER

acrylic on vinyl record
12" diameter



A GLACIAL SHIFT

RICHARD POLOMSKY

"Why do you collect those musty things?"

"I don't know, maybe because I'm an antiquarian at heart?"

She approached him dressed in a flowing white gown, and ornate leg braces, which eased her into a lovely and natural gait. "Why not invoke one on your folio?"

He placed a book down on his lap and cracked it open. "But I always find those ones a bit lacking."

She approached him and wrapped her arms around his crooked neck. "How so?"

"I invoked one the other day about old clothing styles--the kinds of fabric they used, color combinations, and stitching methods--it contained just about everything."

She drew her pale face close to his, kissed him and said, "You and your devil in the details."

"But when it came to the size and measurements, I could find nothing."

"Didn't the outfits women wore back then leave little to the imagination?"

He squeezed her thigh and said, "A practice that I wouldn't mind see make a return."

"Naughty boy." She then pulled away from him, went and took a seat in the bay window.

As she gazed on the twisted limbs of an oak tree, her body began to shiver. "You're still going with me tomorrow, right?"

The fear was there, he had seen it before from other expectant mothers, and said what all men did in that moment, "Of course I am."

She spread her fingers over her round belly. "I just worry that when the time comes..."

"From here on out, I will be at your side," he said, and flipped to a random page. "Strange."

"What?"

"Dog breeders used to cull healthy pups, and kept only those that they found physically appealing."

"What else does it say?"

The book slid from his lap and fell to the floor.

She looked away from the window. "Is something wrong, love?"

"I saw how one breed went extinct, that's all."

With darkened cheeks, she smiled and said, "I cannot wait to give birth, to see our child. Do you think it will hurt?"

He looked down to a page of the book. "Hurt?"

"Yes, when I'm made to lie down and sleep, will it hurt?"

His eyes gradually focused on an illustration labeled C-SECTION OF FRENCH BULLDOG. "No, you won't feel a thing. When you wake up the damage will already be done."

LUNGS

KARLA BAUTISTA

micron pen, marker on paper
24" x 18"



MYCELIUM POISONING

COLE SCHNAUDIGEL

clay, glaze, mushroom mycelium
Video: https://youtu.be/uPlKgZk73Rk
3" x 8.5" x 8"



FRIENDLY STRANGER VILLANELLE

SYLVIA E. MENDEZ

It was quiet throughout the town except for a full-mouthed scream.
One that could wake the dead and make you fear being seen,
they never caught the man so how will we ever know his scheme?

The snow was pierced with red droplets from above, where
she hung all night with silky white legs so lean
for it was quiet throughout the town except for a full-mouthed scream

that rung out as the clock's hands came together in prayer,
as time witnessed and mourned the passing of young Morenne;
because they never caught the man now they will never know his scheme.

He raps his knuckles against my wooden door watching his skin tear,
twisting the copper knob and letting the door invite him in with hearing so keen,
it was too quiet throughout the town except for my full-mouthed scream

as his shadow swallowed up the room and lifted me off the bed with care.
Boots crunching past the place where weightless, silky, white legs had been.
Since they never caught the man, I now know his scheme

is to make sure church bells ring for us, Morenne and I, as parents and children stare
at the twisted oak tree where they'll have to cut the rope of the latest slain teen;
It was not quiet throughout the town as weeping echoed like a full-mouthed scream
and they never caught the man because they know him but not his scheme.

AVERAGE MOTION

SULEM TORRES

ink, collage on illustration board
15" x 15"



WHEN IT COMES FOR US (FOR IT WILL)

SYLVIA E. MENDEZ

every morning it comes for us
it flickers as it starts to shed light on us
as we pry our crusted-over eyes to see
ourselves in the mirror it
stares back at us it starts with the heavy purplish hues that seep into us
the pulsating headache underneath
our skin as we comb last night's sins out of
haggard hair to be passable for it comes for us
gripping its hands on hips as water drips onto bare
feet as we stare into the divides between our toes as today's first big
leap before we blink
to remember our souls swirl inside feeble bodies that
are tethered between the common and the ideal
because the voice inside our head repeats
too wide, too plain, too loud, or too broken making us
too small to pick up
the jagged pieces that we need & so we sink
into the abyss of what
ifs & change our appearance to fit those who make
us question for it comes for us it comes at us it comes between us
why can't it see us
trying to breathe when we finally find enough exertion to
put on something clean
it wakes up with us & it sleeps with us
while we struggle to
shake the chattering shadows that creep when it's late

so we stare at the eggshell walls that surround ourselves for we
aren't too sure what will be.

MINNIE THE MOOCHER

CHARLES BUEHLER

digital photography
4.5" x 5"



EZRA & PAISLEY

NATALIA MATLAG

I brushed my way past a group of town residents huddled together by the parlor entrance. I continued to pass by more people dressed solely in black clothes, sitting on benches as they admired displays of red dahlias. Before I knew it, I found myself standing face-to-face with the casket holding James Walsh. The man's notorious inhospitable frown was frozen onto his face, even after death. Even my father, an incredible mortician, though he was the only one in town, could not rid James of his dark eye bags and stress-induced wrinkles. I stealthily glanced behind me, catching glimpses of townsfolk who shed tears over a man they had despised. It sickened me, in a way. The fact that James was clearly the town's black sheep, feared and hated by all, but now transformed into an angel by death that we were now expected to glorify. I walked to the back of the parlor again, purposefully taking a seat on the furthest bench away from the casket. I sat in silence, listening in on the fraudulent condolences that people were offering to Alana Walsh after laying a hand on the cherry hardwood casket.

Newlyweds James and Alana Walsh had moved to the small and secluded town of Willow Brook twenty years ago, a couple of years before I was born. It was said that their relationship was volatile from the start, but severe turmoil didn't develop until their son was born, raising suspicion of a shotgun marriage. During their residence here, piercing noises would constantly emit from the Walsh mansion. It was said that standing outside the mansion, one could distinctly hear objects being thrown and broken. However, it appeared almost silent compared to James' raging howls. Although the Walsh residence was within the town's boundaries, it was hidden on the outskirts in the woods, isolated as if it was on an island of its own.

My thoughts were interrupted when a tall figure stepped in front of me. The man took a quaff from his flask. "You're very vibrant. For a funeral at least," he stated, tilting his head all the way back to finish off whatever was left in the flask. Even at first glance, it was obvious that he was a Walsh. He was very tall, his height exaggerating his already extremely thin body. His eyes resembled a murky ocean, and his dark hair curled around his face. And his skin, pale enough to accentuate his eye bags, exactly like James'. Regardless of his lankiness, I found myself to be surprisingly attracted to him. Though I've always been told my positive aura was my most noticeable feature, I wasn't quite sure whether he meant it as a compliment. All my life I'd tried to keep a smile plastered on my face, for it appeared to brighten the lives of others. "Yeah, I guess I'm simply grateful for the fact that I'm not the one who is about to be buried six feet underground," I replied, moving slightly to my right to make room beside me for the handsome stranger. "Well, if it were up to me," he plopped down, "He should be buried deep enough to converse with Satan himself," he said. I found the

man intriguing, for he had the audacity to confess his true feelings about the deceased, despite funeral norms. "Oh yeah, why do you say that?" I shifted my body to face him. "I'm Ezra Walsh... The son," he extended his free hand towards me. His grasp was weak but soft. I pulled away almost instantly, and carefully placed my hand over the black lace that rested across my legs. "I'm Paisley Abram," I subconsciously began to play with a strand of my curly brown hair using my opposite hand. "Abram, as in Abram Funeral Home? Edward and Ophelia's daughter?" he lifted his flask back up to his lips before remembering it was empty. Although nobody had appeared to know much about the Walsh family, only informed by theories based on few true details, it seemed as if the Walsh family knew a little something about us.

James and Alana had always been a common conversation topic, but not Ezra. I'd seen him around town a few times as a child, but never bothered to interact with someone a few years older than me. From what I can recall, most people wouldn't assume he was James' son. He behaved like a subpar Willow Brook kid, mainly keeping to himself, and failing to address the family rumors I was now desperate to learn the validity of. After his class graduation, I never saw him again, let alone thought about him. Most Willow Brook residents lived their entire lives here, leaving their children to continue representing the family name after their passing. But not Ezra, or any Walsh for that matter. They all just seemed to disappear. After nodding in response to his comment, he looked me up and down with a steady gaze. "Let's go get a drink," he suggested as he grabbed my hand in an attempt to pull me up. I hesitated as I told him I wasn't of legal age. He revealed a crooked smile, and continued to tug at my hand, saying "If you want to know my story, you're going to have to get me a lot less sober than I am now." Though he was tipsy, I was impressed by his forwardness. Hungry for his story, I stood up and let him guide me out of the funeral home. We passed by every town resident, however, they were all too invested in their reunions to notice us. Ezra let go of my hand when we reached the dirt-paved parking lot. As he fumbled around a few parked cars, I took a moment to admire the multicolored trees towering over my father's business, and how they complimented the variety of purples throughout the evening sky. I suddenly realized Ezra was reaching for the door handle of his vehicle, James' black pickup truck, and rushed over to pull him away. "You're not driving like this," I tugged at his bony shoulders. He tried to resist, but couldn't help but stumble back. "Then you drive," he harshly tossed me the keys. As they landed in my hand, I brushed my thumb over each detail before deciding to sweep past Ezra, and into the driver's seat. He slowly struggled to walk to the passenger side. "You're cute, but you're pretty boring, you know," he complained as he slammed his door shut. I rolled my eyes at his comment and started the truck.

continued on page 22

EZRA & PAISLEY

continued from page 21

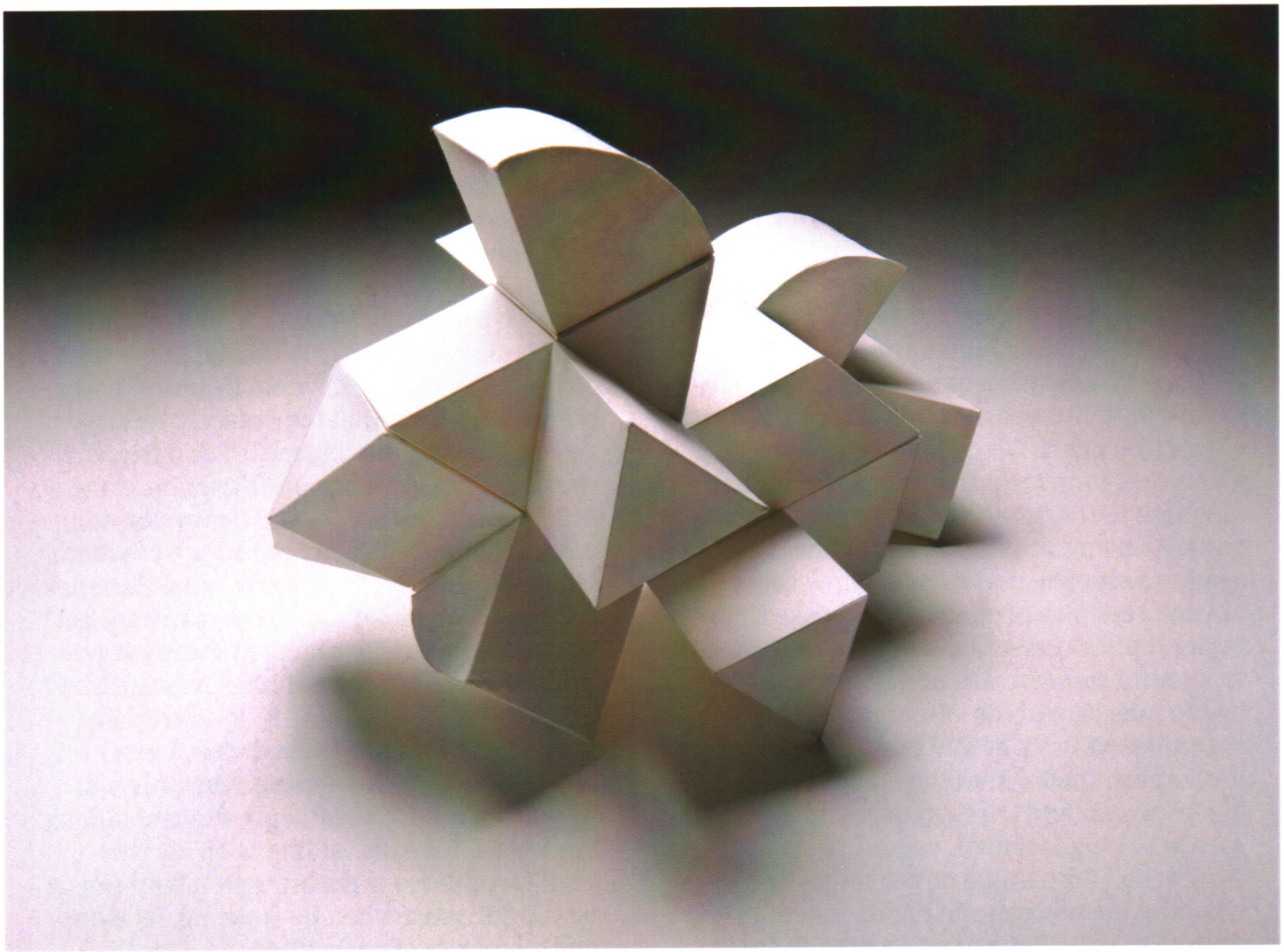
We could've easily walked over to O'Sullivan's Pub; it was only a four-minute drive. I carefully parked the car alongside the street and made my way over to Ezra's side of the truck to help him stand. He gently pushed me off him, insisting he was fine. We walked side-by-side to face the glowing yellow lights that spelled out O'Sullivan's Pub, set right above a pair of dark wooden doors on the fading red brick building. The inside of the pub was empty, for all the townsfolk were overjoyed to use the funeral as an excuse for a social gathering. Even Jack O'Sullivan, the owner, was attending, leaving the pub for me and Ezra. The unlocked doors came as no surprise, given that the residents were very trusting of each other. The dijon tinted lights were still on, revealing a black cherry counter with an infinite alcohol display behind it, and eight wobbly bar stools unevenly spaced in front. The rest of the pub, worn down booths and tables, hid in the dark. Ezra automatically walked behind the counter and grabbed a bottle of whiskey, ice, and two tumblers. Taking a seat on the stool closest to him, I put my hand up before Ezra could pour me a drink. He shook his head and let out a faint laugh as he slid the Whiskey away. I joined him behind the counter, reaching for a nearly empty bottle of Rosé. "Very typical, I should've guessed," he said before making his way towards the sound system. The Words You Say by Harrison Storm began to play, Ezra playfully dancing back over to me. "Do you drink often?" I asked. "Only during celebratory occasions... Just as my father did," he answered, assuming I'd share false interpretations with others. That wasn't the case though. I realized that I had become more interested in Ezra's life rather than the Walsh family's. The song came to an end, and Ezra stopped dancing to take a sip out of his tumbler. I followed his lead and drank out of the bottle I had my fingers tightly grasped around. Ezra studied me for a few seconds before stating that I was uncomfortable. In all honesty, I wasn't sure how I felt. I was curious, quite possibly craving a little intimacy. Nonetheless, I had agreed to let a stranger take me out for a drink. In an attempt to deny his claims, I reached my hand out to him, as he had previously done to me. This time though, I forcefully intertwined my fingers with his. Shockingly, it felt as though our hands fit together perfectly. He followed my grasp to my side of the counter, whiskey still held firmly in his opposite hand, and sat down to face me. I think he noticed before I did, that my smile began to fade when he pulled his hand away. He slowly leaned in towards me and parted his lips. As soon as I reacted, he pulled away, as if he was testing me. "Don't worry, Paisley. I definitely like you," he whispered as he leaned back into his natural slouching position. Though I'd just met him, I already felt awfully drawn to him. I was washed over with a sense of relief when he said that. However, I couldn't help but wonder why he didn't kiss me if he liked me. Even more so after refilling his tumbler about five times now.

"So, Paisley Abram. What do you want to know?" he decided to copy me by now drinking straight out of the bottle. The alcohol must've hit already, for I very promptly asked if he had a girlfriend. "No. Not anymore. After graduating high school, a few friends and I decided to drive out to a random town. They all went home, but I stayed back after meeting a girl. We were under the impression that we were in love, so I moved out permanently. Not even for love, but for myself. I had nothing to cherish in Willow Brook," he reached for his bottle again. "Alana and James?" I moved the bottle out of reach before he could get to it. "Alana left town when I was barely ten years old, leaving me with my father. And my father-" he cut off. "I simply had nothing worth holding onto. Hayden and I had been together for about five years. And as all young love does, it fell apart. On civil terms, we decided it was best for us to grow individually. I had nowhere to stay after the breakup, so I came home a few months ago actually," he managed to swipe the bottle back. "How come I haven't seen you around then?" I asked. "My father. I didn't know he had gotten extremely sick until I came back. And although he- I had to take care of him. He's my father regardless of how far and how long we've been apart. During that time, I didn't feel like going out and stirring up gossip. I wasn't sure how long I wanted, *needed*, to stay." He reached for a bottle of bourbon after finishing the whiskey. "What do you think you want, now that you don't need to stay?" I raised my brow. "With my father gone, everything he owned is mine. I might as well rebuild my life with what was given to me," he finally began to clean up after himself. "And," he looked me in the eyes, "I may have found someone interesting enough to make me want to stick around," he leaned in again. I blushed but was hesitant due to the previous time. I caught the time on my watch from the corner of my eye, realizing it was getting late. "I hope you do stick around Ezra," I said, rejecting his advances, "And I hope to see you around, but I think tonight may have to end earlier than planned." "Let me walk you home, and I'll just come back for my car in the morning," he insisted. I expressed my concern for letting a drunk man in mourning wander the streets in the middle of the night. "It seems as though it would be best if both of us spent the night at my place?" he suggested. His invitation came off as a friendly gesture, a convenience. It disappointed me a little, though. I nodded, and before leaving, placed a hundred dollar bill on the counter for the indirect service. Back inside the truck, Ezra gave me directions to the mansion, but I didn't bother telling him I knew my way around the entire town. I liked hearing him talk. His voice was scratchy, in a seductive way. And although he was drunk, I was interested in his blabbering. Nine minutes into the drive, Ezra suddenly stopped talking and closed his eyes, sliding deep into his seat. I wondered if the attraction between us would still exist when he woke up, let alone our memories of each other.

SHIFTING PLANES

STANISLAVA STOYCHEVA

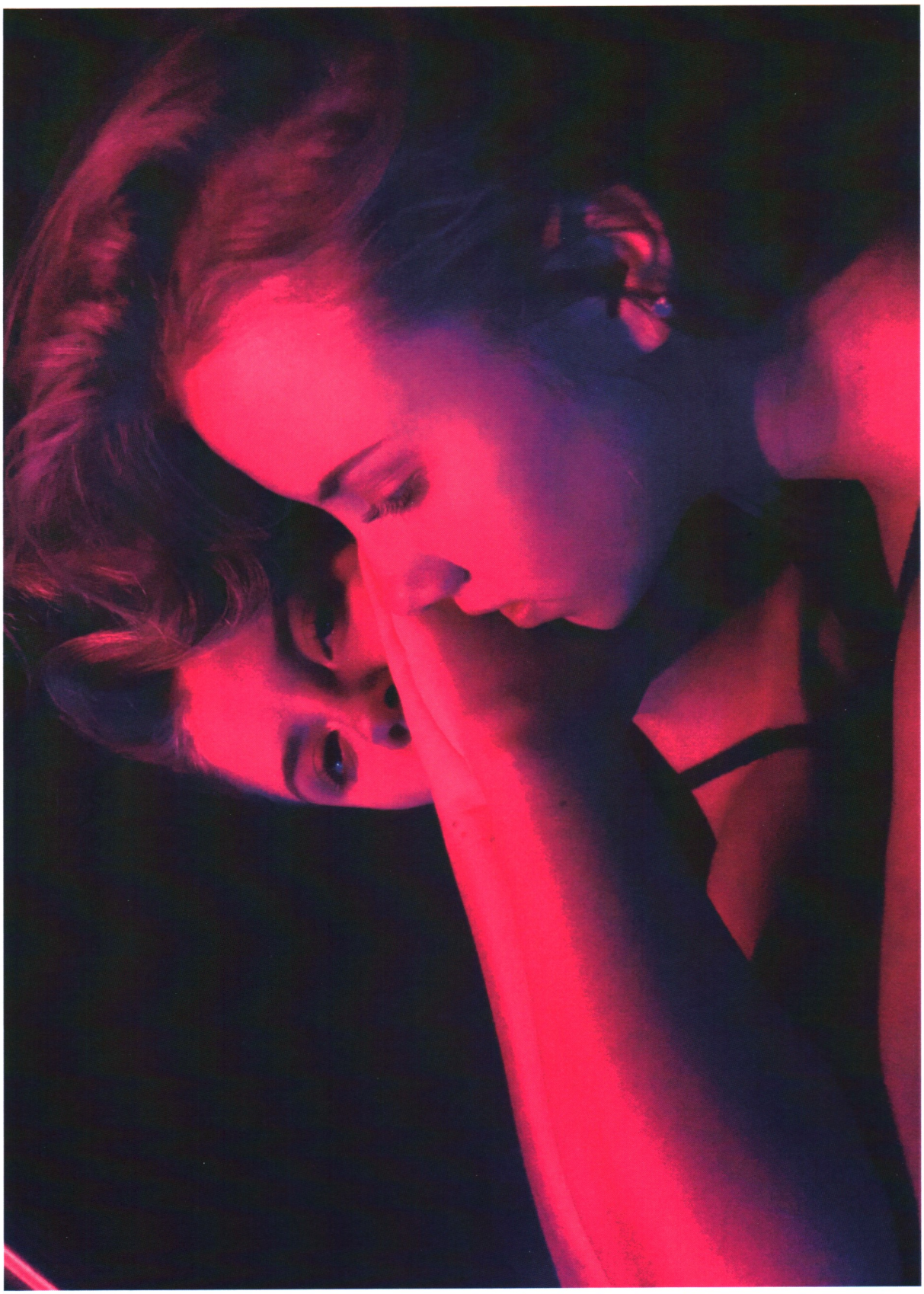
folded paper and glue
10" x 7" x 7"



WHO AM I?

FERNANDA HERNANDEZ

digital photography
5.7" x 8"



BIRD SONG

JAMES NAUGHTON

Did you know
That the birds sing at three a.m.
Who is there to listen

To the singsong melodies
They eject from their little beaks
A pensive old widower
Sitting on his branch above

Looks down at the young
And remembers

GRASS

CHARLES BUEHLER

digital photography
6" x 9"



CPTSD IN THE SEA

ARI MCKELLIN

Ice glazed over
The vast sea below
That is the horror
That is my past.

Each time
Someone takes a step
Assuming solid ground.
The ice creaks
Like a rusty gate
And immediately
My heart races.
But I'm paralyzed.
I'm aphasic,
Typically asymptomatic.

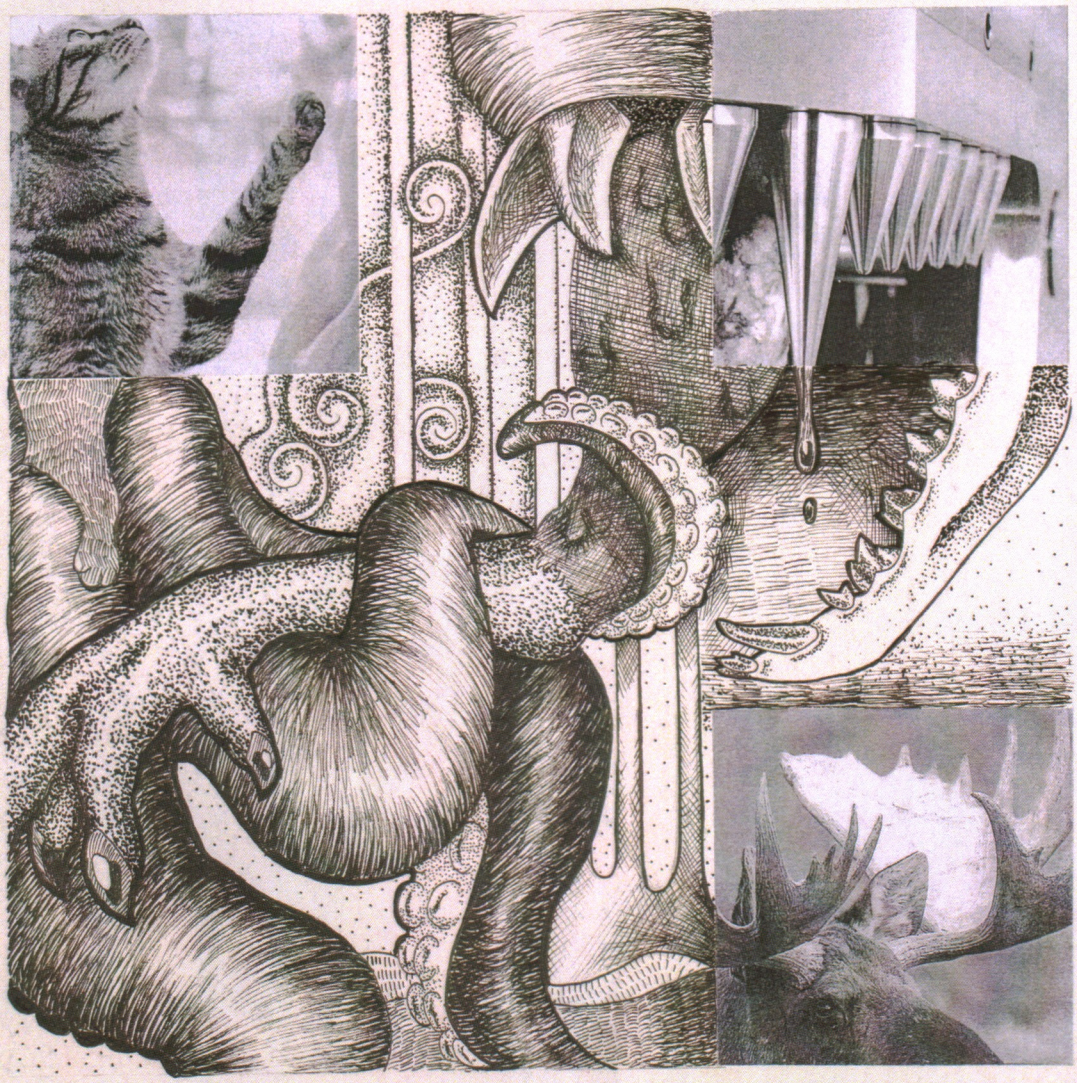
If the ice snaps there,
The ice snaps here.
If the ice snaps here,
I plunge in,
Swallowed,
Engulfed in the
Ever-changing water,
Drowning.

My head may pop up like a bobber,
Gasping for air,
But it won't take long
Before the current
Yanks me back down
For another playdate
With my living nightmares.

CHICKEN SCRATCH

VICTORIA MANKOWSKI

ink, collage on illustration board
15" x 15"



DAFFODILS

ADRIANA BRISCOE

Drape me in daffodils
To denote one year
Of calling you my yellow —
no reciprocal hello

Play Yellow by Coldplay
To honor your sundance
& grieve your absence —
76.8 miles away

Sometimes I wither without your sunshine
But I have to remember that despite
distance,
despair,
& darkness —
Daffodils are yellow too.

NATURE'S IMPRISONMENT OF MAN

COLE SCHNAUDIGEL

clay, iron oxide, wood, string, dandelion
10" x 10" x 10"



RAY MILLS AWARD WINNER

NIGHT SHIFT

RICHARD POLOMSKY

Sarah hated that her husband worked late. They hardly ever got a chance to spend any time together. She would wake up at six, shower, dress, and eat her breakfast. By seven she would be on her way to the veterinary hospital. Meanwhile, Phil would lie in bed, having gotten home sometime during the night.

After shutting the television off, Sarah left a bowl of melted ice cream on the couch, and felt her way through the dark house. The walls flashed in the light of a passing car. The massive shape of a spider appeared and then vanished. A house spider as it skittered across the windowpane.

When Sarah settled down for the night and fell asleep, a snake-like movement crept in from beneath the comforter. She tossed and turned, though did not wake.

A tendril slithered out to the pillow beside hers.

Its eel-like flesh molted away.

A pair of eyes blinked open, pale and dead.

A ragged tear.

Clenched teeth.

Budding limbs.

Rapid, twisting growth.

Bones popped and cracked.

Knuckles formed.

Fingers curled and gripped the comforter.

The dead eyes became baby blue.

In Sarah's dream, something damp and rubbery brushed up against her leg. She let out a moan and woke. Sunlight glowed brightly over the dresser clock that read a quarter to six.

Sarah felt the comforter yanked away from her, and sat up angrily, though when she saw her sleeping husband, she thought, "He must've just crawled in."

UNTITLED

KATIE KUBICA

ink, collage on illustration board
15" x 15"



PROMISE

SYLVIA E. MENDEZ

i'd ask where he is
but
he's just going to lie
say he's throwing back shots
with the guys
you don't need me to fall asleep
again
every Sunday night
for the past six months
he's been mouthing
with that wanton girl from work
i imagine them at a bar
chugging Guinness
like we used to
rubbernecking her
like he used to...

when he walks through that door
i'm going to pull that checkered tie
into pale fist
demand he fucks me
like i never do
like she probably would
when he tries to pull out
sweaty unshaven legs will wrap
around muscular back
like Venus flytrap
like Venus the goddess
he promised marriage
        kids
after nine years
he's going to keep his promise

NIGHTCLUB

ALEXIS ALVAREZ

colored pencils
15" x 20"



FRIDA'S MONKEY

FRANCISCO MUCI

screen print, 7 colors
20.5" x 15.5"



3 VASES

PAM PHILLIPS

ceramics
6.5" x 5" x 4.5"
4" x 4" x 4"
2.5" x 3" x 3"



ABSENT PERMANENCE

SYLVIA E. MENDEZ

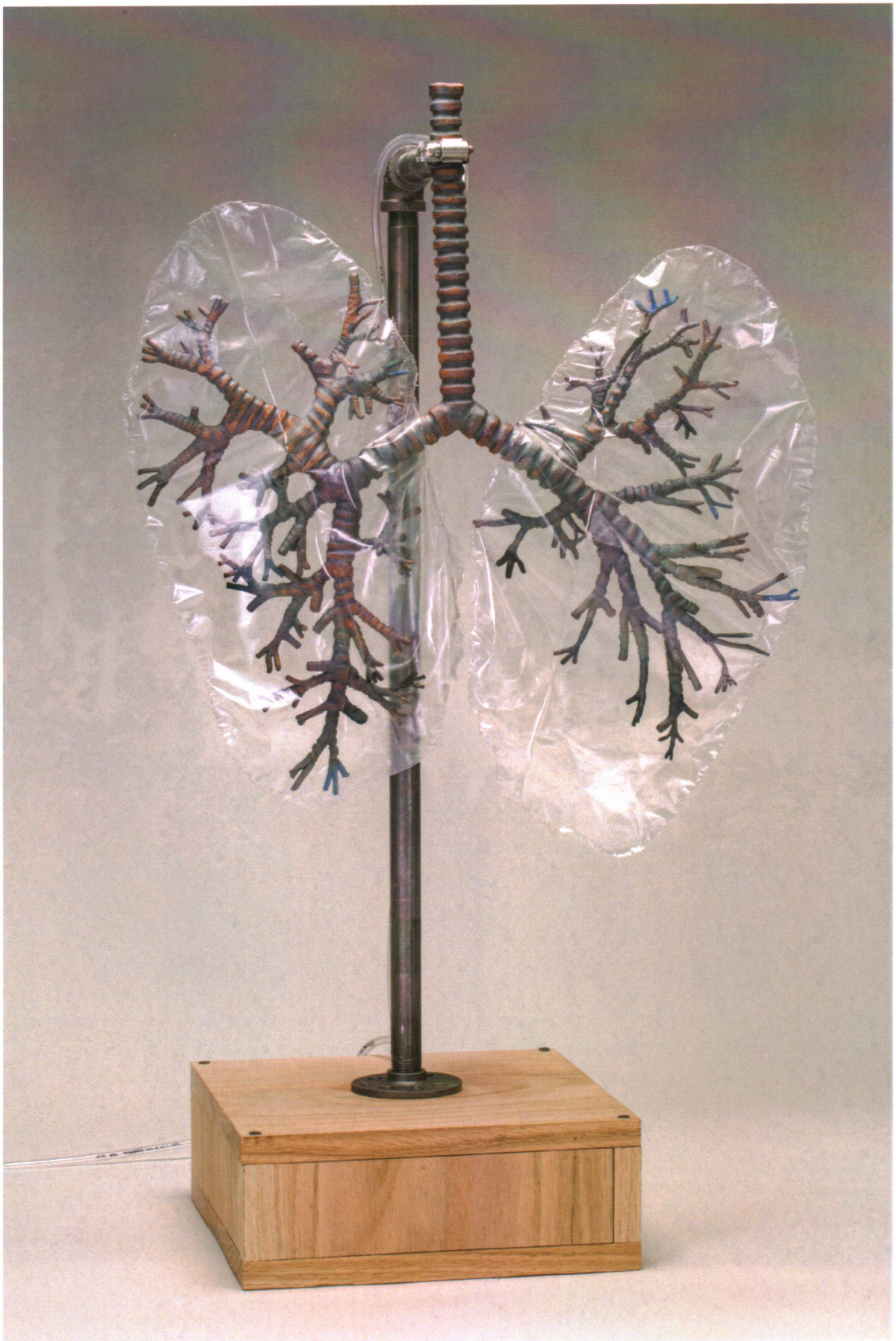
An abandoned playground.

A wooden swing creaks — History
SHRIEKS.

SUFFOCATION

COLE SCHNAUDIGEL

Clay, iron oxide, steel, plastic, wood, bicycle pump
Video: https://youtu.be/xLCOItHEgv0
31" x 17" x 12"



50'S KITCHEN

JAMES NAUGHTON

~Curtis Jackson's Jamaica Queen's apartment,
kitchen, German chocolate cake mix on the
counter; Jackson is rapping "the rap critics
say I can rhyme, every chick I f*** with is a
dime" ~

The German chocolate cake begins to shine
Can't tell that 50 got hit 9 times
Removes his oven mitts
And sits

The glaze is on its grind
Fluffy, spongy, moist
50 made a grand
Choice

Frosting around its rim
The steel in his teeth
Illuminate his grin
He feels the flour and eggs within

"This rap life is full of sin,"
Better to be with Pac
At baker's Inn.

ANGULAR APPLE

YUKY KONNO

railroad paper, acrylic latex paint, printed glossy photo paper, plaster
16.3" x 12" x 3.7"



PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

ADRIANA BRISCOE

I took a scoop of pudding
Fully grasping on the spoon,
But you
— snatched —
it away from me.
Coddled cocoa catastrophe.

I had a moment to savor
In sweet cocoa strength,
But you selfishly took it
Into your arm's length.

I can feed myself.

Proof is in the pudding
I scooped without your help.

STILL LIFE

JACQUELINE RILLORAZA

Charcoal, white chalk, conté pencil
20" x 20"



MELLOW MOONLIGHT

ADRIANA BRISCOE

Mellow moonlight,
Moaning like morbid mummies,
Buried under a mask of misery,

I, too, light up the land with love,
Yet echo aches of excruciating emptiness.

Wolves howl to you under the
~willows of the wood ~
~wailing for company ~

But all you have to give is melancholy

People pop up in my presence for

~ pleasance ~
or
~ pep talk ~

But all I have to give is a cry in my

descent
down
into the depths of the dirt,

Where mummies moan,
–mumbling–
To the mellow moonlight.

LOOKING BACK

STANISLAVA STOYCHEVA

mixed media charcoal drawing
24" x 18"



CREDITS

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Cole Schnaudigel, *Nature's Imprisonment of Man*

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POINT OF VIEW AWARD
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"Creativity takes courage"
~ **HENRI MATISSE**



"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you"
~ **MAYA ANGELOU**

"Every artist was first an amateur"
~ **RALPH WALDO EMERSON**

"Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time"
~ **THOMAS MERTON**

"If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot"
~ **STEPHEN KING**